



Monday, November 20, 2006

## **ALMOs HONOURED IN UK HOUSING AWARDS**

Two ALMOs have underlined the importance of tenant empowerment in delivering excellence in housing services by scooping some of the UK's top housing accolades.

Sheffield Homes and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) have both been honoured in the 10<sup>th</sup> UK Housing Awards organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing after winning categories centered on delivering important benefits for tenants above and beyond the traditional housing remit.

Sheffield Homes won the 'Excellence in Delivering Safer Neighbourhoods' category for the work of its Neighbourhood Action Team and YHN's Furniture Service was named winner of the UK Housing Awards prize for Excellence in Support and Care Solutions at a ceremony at the Hilton Hotel in London.

Two other ALMOs – Bolton at Home and Homes For Islington - were also honoured as finalists.

Sheffield Home's Neighbourhood Action Team works with Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs) and other community partners to develop and deliver anti-social behaviour action plans tailored to the local needs of each area.

Projects have included Good Neighbour Agreements, Good Trader Agreements and mapping of youth hotspots, to help other local agencies. In March, MP David Blunkett launched the Team's Witness Support Scheme, which in conjunction with the Police, has provided training to 40 TARA members so they can assist witnesses of anti-social behaviour.

YHN's Furniture Service was recognised for its work helping people set up and thrive in new homes through the loan of home and garden furniture and installation of child safety equipment. The ALMOs Asylum Seekers Unit, which provides support and accommodation to those applying for asylum, was also a nominee at the awards.

Chairman of the National Federation of ALMOs, Dennis Rees said: "Since their inception just four years ago ALMOs have transformed the way council housing is delivered and I'm delighted the trailblazing programmes being delivered have been recognised in this way. Special congratulations go to Sheffield Homes and Your Homes Newcastle who have both worked tirelessly to develop unique projects that make a very real difference to the lives and wellbeing of tenants."

Peter Morton, Sheffield Homes Chief Executive, said, "These awards are very prestigious and it's great to see the excellent work we do in the community recognised on a national stage. I would like to thank all the local tenants and residents who support our work and help us to make neighbourhoods in Sheffield safer and more pleasant places to live."

John Lee, Chief Executive of Your Homes Newcastle, added: "The Housing Awards are highly regarded and everyone who has contributed to this success should be very proud"

The UK Housing Awards are the latest in a run of accolades secured by ALMOs across the UK for their standards of service to tenants. Last month Kensington & Chelsea TMO secured its three-star 'excellent' status following an inspection by the Audit Commission. The award followed hot on the heels of three

other ALMOs – CityWest Homes, Derby Homes and Ashfield Homes in Nottinghamshire all retaining their three-star ratings earlier this year.

There is currently a total of 12 ALMOs across the country holding the three star ranking – the highest available across the council housing management spectrum, putting them in the top 1% of all housing management services in the UK. No traditional local authority and only one housing association has achieved three star status in the last three years.

**Ends**

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**Notes to editors:**

- There are currently 61 ALMOs in operation across 56 local authorities managing 910,000 council properties. By March 2007 this will have grown to one million council homes – half of all council properties.
- Since their introduction just four years ago, over 100,000 homes have been brought up to the Decent Homes Standard by ALMOs – equating to one every 15 minutes.
- For more information go to [www.almos.org.uk](http://www.almos.org.uk)